

# Daily News-Sun

## Clean and 'smober'



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Carolyn Mitchell finds solace in the tranquility garden she designed at her Surprise home with her husband Lyle. She recently quit smoking after 49 years.

### County program helps longtime smoker kick habit

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DAILY NEWS-SUN

Three months, two weeks, one day, nine hours and 37 seconds. Dollars saved: \$456. Cigarettes not smoked: 2,148. Estimated addition to life span: one week and 11 hours.

These ever-changing numbers reflect Surprise resident Carolyn Mitchell's "smober" time. They stay with her as a reminder of what she has accomplished since turning over her cigarettes to Maricopa County health officials June 12.

"Since I stopped smoking, my life has started to open and evolve in ways I wouldn't have imagined," said Mitchell, a pack-a-day smoker for 49 years. "It does keep getting easier. Is it easy as pie now? No. But I am trying."

Mitchell initially got help through a six-week program run by tobacco cessation specialists from Maricopa County. The programs offer soon-to-be nonsmokers a network of other

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smokers to talk to, 50 percent off nicotine replacement therapies such as gum, patches and lozenges and professional help.

"We help people understand they have to break psychological, sociocultural and biological boundaries," said cessation specialist Joanna Newton. "If people don't break all three they have less of a chance at quitting and staying quit."

The program, which is co-sponsored by the University of Arizona, the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, is offered at 30 locations throughout the Valley. It also includes an

Internet blog, [www.quittersbog.com](http://www.quittersbog.com), where people can discuss how they are feeling without cigarettes.

For Mitchell, who started smoking as a teenager because she "didn't know any better," quitting smoking meant making changes in her life beyond just putting the cigarettes down.

Every day she would wake up in the morning and her first item of business was a smoke outside in the back yard. Since going in the back yard was a trigger for smoking urges, Mitchell transformed the front part of

See QUIT, A5

## To quit smoking ask yourself these questions

Am I clear about why I want to quit?  
Do I hate the negative aspects of smoking?  
Am I worried about how smoking affects my health  
and my family?  
Am I quitting because I want to, not because someone  
else is talking me into it?  
Do I have a plan on how to quit?  
Can I overcome problems that have disabled myself  
from prior attempts at quitting?  
Am I ready to make quitting a priority?  
If you answered yes to five or more of those ques-  
tions:  
Call Maricopa County at (602) 372-7272.  
Mitchell's support group meets 5 p.m., Wednesdays at  
the Village Inn on Grand in Surprise.  
For information e-mail Carolyn at  
carolynm16@cox.net.  
For help visit [www.quittersblog.com](http://www.quittersblog.com).

## QUIT: Avoid triggers

From A1

her house in to a tranquility garden. Filled with flowers, windchimes, rocks and a fountain, it's a quiet peaceful place where Mitchell now sits in the morning and meditates.

"I'm getting through the triggers," Mitchell said. "I've gotten to the place where I can find tranquility in other ways. The hardest part has been changing patterns of behavior and thought processes. I have to learn to not romance the cigarette."

Newton said about 90 percent of the students who go through their classes succeed at quitting because the cessation specialists offer not only an educationally based program, but also have genuine care and concern for their students.

"We utilize our plan in a matter that gives our students a foundation to build their quit plan on," said Newton. "From there we take them through a process that shows the the importance of knowing that tobacco is an

addiction."

Mitchell, an artist, has also found help by starting her own support group in Surprise. The group meets at 5 p.m. Wednesdays at the Village Inn on Grand Avenue. She wants to work with the county to eventually bridge the end of their program to the group because she feels even after three months, it still helps her to have support.

"Smokers are underdogs," she said. "When I was 15, I made a choice to smoke because I didn't know any better. I've made a different choice now, but it is damned hard. It's a commitment I have to keep working at."

But she will make it, if only to be a role model to her grandchildren, stay healthy for her husband, who lost his first wife to lung cancer from smoking, and to enjoy the new power she feels from within as a non-smoker.

"I never got to satisfy the flower child in me," she said. "Now the flower child is rising again."

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